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ABSTRACT

In Turkey today, 93% of all persons between the ages of 6 and 15 attend school, and 89.7% of males and 71.1.% of females over the age of 15 are literate. Turkey's largest adult education programs are public, free, and offered both within and outside the formal educational system by governmental bodies, national institutions, and voluntary organizations. Since the Republic of Turkey's founding in 1923, many government and nongovernment agencies have been supporting or offering programs for adults in literacy, farmers', vocational efficiency, health, family living, women's, and citizenship education. Turkey has public reading rooms designed to serve as lending libraries and meeting places for reading circles, discussions/lectures, and short-term courses. Since 1926, women's education has been supported by a civil code establishing basic gender equality. Training programs for women emphasizing health and family planning operate largely as mobile courses touring villages. Public education centers called people's houses offer adult education activities in areas such as language and literature, fine arts, drama, sports/games, social assistance, literacy and foreign language, library use, and rural activities. Turkey's fifth (present) 5-year development plan includes provisions to integrate the educational system by forming organic relationships between the formal and nonformal educational systems. (Contains 17 references.) (MN)

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LITERACY IN TURKEY

With Special Reference to Women's State

*Mualla Ulusavas**

The Republic of Turkey was founded in 1923 after the First World War.Turkish nation enjoyed the leadership of a man of vision,courage and ability who forged a new nation out of the remnants of a defeated empire (Ottoman Empire) and launched it effectively on the path to modernization.That man was Ataturk, who following the establishment of the Turkish Republic,promptly forced through fundamental changes in social and political institutions, changes that he rightly considered essential to modernization. "Education was an important component of his program for Ataturk realized that the essence of modernity lay in the minds of people"(Szyliowicz , 1973,p.199).

"After the victory, Ataturk, as the leader of a newly independent Turkish state, inwardly knew that the real struggle lay ahead, the struggle to lift the Turkish people out of centuries of lethargy, poverty, and ignorance" (Spencer,1990, 113). Since 1920 education has been a priority. "Illiteracy has been drastically reduced, but still is a problem. When the republic was proclaimed, only 9% of its people could read and write. Today, basic education is compulsory between the ages 6-15 and 93% of

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this age group do in fact attend school" (*Enc. Amc.*, 1992,255). "Literacy over age 15 totals 80.7%; male 89.7% and female 71.1% -1990 census" (*Enc.Bri.*, 1993 ,198).

Education in Turkey is operated and financed largely by public expenditures.The largest adult education programs are also public and free.The Turkish Education System is basically regulated by laws; certain principles related to the conduct of education were included in the constitution of the newly created Turkish Republic.One of those principles was compulsory elementary education for girls and boys free of charge in public schools. Today, the system is based on eight years of compulsory basic education.

The Basic Aims

The Basic Law of National Education establishes the guidelines for the organization and conduct of the total system. The first part of the Basic Law contains a statement of aims and fundamental principles. It expresses adherence to Republican ideals and to Ataturk's reforms as values to be instilled; it goes on to stress the development of mature personality, high moral character, scientific thinking, independence of judgment, initiative, creativity, respect for others, sense of responsibility, cooperation and vocational competence as general directions in the education of Turkish citizens. The ultimate goal of national education is defined as to increase the prosperity and happiness of Turkish society and its citizens; to facilitate and accelerate economic, social and cultural development within the conditions of national unity and cohesion; and finally to help the Turkish nation become an outstanding member of contemporary civilization, with a constructive and creative outlook.

The Principles

The fundamental principles of Turkish education are enumerated under several headings. Among them are equal treatment of everyone regardless of native tongue, race, gender, and creed; consideration of both social needs and individual aptitudes and interests with proper channeling into various schools or programs; the right to basic education; equality of opportunity for everyone; observance of national and democratic values; secularism; co-education to the extent which is possible; cooperation between the school and parents; and provision of non-formal and continuing education.

"Equality of opportunity may be said to exist when education is available to everybody on the basis of individual ability and aspirations and not of wealth, place of residence and social affiliation....The limitations of the present system of education in Turkey, including shortages of accommodation, staff, and equipment at every level, impose a series of constraints on the passage of the individual from the primary school up through the system" (OECD, 1965, 59).

"The *purpose* of non-formal education is to offer to people (who never entered the formal education system, are at any level of it or are drop-outs from the system) the following opportunity primarily :

* To teach reading and writing, to offer continuous educational opportunities so that they can make up for their educational short comings.

Efforts in the Early Republican Period

The problem of rural backwardness and ignorance among villagers deeply concerned Ataturk and his party during the formative period of their government. The famous dictum of Ataturk that "the real owner and

master of the country is the peasant" reverberated in all policy statements, speeches and press publications in the 1930's. "In 1929, the National Schools Law was passed to establish centers in villages to impart literacy " (Nabi, 1983, 161). "Mass education, especially the doing away with illiteracy, is strongly emphasized. The adoption of the new alphabet has added to the zeal for mass education and it has certainly facilitated reading and writing to a very large extent" (Evrenol, 1936, p. 66). Besides restructuring and reorganizing the existing educational system, the new government of the republic also moved to expand educational opportunities for all citizens.

Since the very beginning of the Republic, many government and non-government agencies have been devoting attention to the education of adults. These early efforts cover:

Education for Literacy
Farmers' Education
Vocational Efficiency Education
Health Education
Family Living and Women's Education
Citizenship Education

Education for Literacy

"Literacy has posed a major problem for the Republic, not only as a matter of daily convenience but also as a means of adjustment to reforms. Ataturkists have bent every effort to decrease the number of illiterates" (Eren, 1963, 204). A census taken in 1927 showed that less than 9% of the population knew how to read the Arabic characters. In 1928 the Arabic alphabet was replaced by Latin alphabet. Following the change of the

alphabet, every young person and adult between the ages of 16 and 45 was required to have a certificate that he could read and write the new letters. Most of the comprehensive attacks on the problem of illiteracy have been carried on by national schools, People's Houses, and public reading rooms. An American writer, in Turkey at that time, Henry Elisha Allen calls the national schools "The most comprehensive system of compulsory education that the world has yet witnessed" (1935, p. 126). In the operation year 1928-29 alone, more than 20,000 courses were opened, attendance ran to more than 1 million, those receiving certificates reached more than 500,000.

The greatest enthusiasm and effort in the campaign for literacy through national schools was seen between 1928 and 1935. Government offices, bands, factories, prisons and private organizations joined in the campaign. Interest was created in thousands of communities through newspapers, lectures, notices, inauguration days with flags, concerts and speeches. The president of the Republic, M. Kemal Ataturk was given the title of Headmaster of all national schools. He, himself had been joining in the campaign, too, by teaching how to write and read.

National schools were of 2 kinds, stationary and mobile, and were of two grades, A and B. The schools which were opened in regular school buildings in cities, towns or villages were called "stationary," and those which operated for a certain period of time in villages without schools were "mobile." Stationary and mobile A schools were for those who did not know how to read and write. "The courses in B schools for those who had finished A school, and contained reading, health, composition, arithmetic and civics" (Evrenol, 1936, 66).

"The national school movement was a well-organized and successful anti-illiteracy campaign. It developed rapidly in the cities and penetrated into the villages" (Oguzkan, 1955, 23).

When the national schools were designed, it was rightly thought that learning the mechanics of reading and writing was but a means of overcoming ignorance, and that the campaign could not give the expected results if a task for reading had not been developed. That was the reason for publishing a magazine and, for taking certain measures in order to stimulate private publishing houses to make readers available for people. Another measure was organizing *public reading rooms*. They are established, financed and regulated by the authorities in charge of national schools. These reading rooms were well thought of and served as a valuable supplement to the national schools. In 1936 their number was reported to be 500.

The main functions of the reading rooms include (Oguzkan,25):

1. Providing a place for reading;
2. Lending reading material for outside use;
3. Forming reading circles;
4. Serving as a meeting place for group discussions, lectures;
5. Providing classrooms for short-term courses;
6. Giving opportunities for listening to radio programs and records;
7. Providing a meeting place for celebrating local and national holidays

Family Living and Women's Education

Until the foundation of the Republic, women were almost denied any form of education. "With the promulgation of the new Civil Code in 1926, the disabilities imposed on women by Islamic Law were swept away.

Polygamy, admittedly infrequent even before the Revolution, was now illegal..A wife now had the same rights as her husband .As early as 1924, too, a number of deputies had made a spirited attempt to give women full political rights. The Municipalities Act of 1930 gave women the right to vote at municipal elections. Their political emancipation was completed in 1934 by a law entitling them to vote in the election of deputies and to stand for election themselves. Women did not get the vote in France until 1945, in Italy till 1946, in Belgium till 1948 ." (Lewis, 1974, 120). "Of all the innovations of Ataturk, the change in the status of women had the most widespread effect" (Eren, 176). "In 1935 with Ataturk's support, seventeen woman were elected deputies to the Grand National Assembly" (Kinross, 1978, 479).

Women's education in modern Turkey received special impetus by the promulgation of the civil code which established basic equality between genders. Ataturk himself was a staunch supporter of co-education. "Is it possible that, while one half of a community stays chained to the ground, the other half can rise to the skies? There is no question - the steps of progress must be taken... by the two sexes together, as friends, and together they must accomplish the various stages of the journey into the land of progress and renovation. If this is done, our revolution will be successful" (quoted in Kinross, 1978, 477). The official policy of Ataturk's government was declared by the Ministry of Education as follows: "The Ministry does not and will not think of a separate treatment for girls and boys either in educational institutions or as youths. Our young boys and girls will be trained within the same system and they will follow the same path" (Nabi, 164).

"Mainly owing to the philosophy of M. Kemal, the place of women in education changed drastically. In 1923 women were admitted to the same classes as man in all university faculties. In 1927 co-education was inaugurated at all levels of the system" (Szyliowicz, 1973, p. 208). As Basgoz and Wilson point out, this was "a far cry from the days when women's schools were surrounded by high walls and staffed by women instructors or occasionally by carefully selected old or unattractive men" (1968,109).

Training programs for women stressing health and family planning operate largely through mobile courses touring the villages, although regional schools are often used for these activities.

The Ministry of Education has four important programs in the field of family education:

1) Home-making programs carried on by the evening vocational schools in cities;

2) Practical homemaking programs in small towns;

3) Traveling village courses for women;

4) A program dealing with the relationships between teachers and parents.

In 1946, School-Family Associations started to be formed in every school, in order to promote mutual understanding and co-operation between school and home.

People's Houses also conducted courses in home-making and aimed at preparing women to become better housewives. There have been numerous private courses training women in family living as well as training for a vocation, such as sewing and dress-making, embroidery, home-management, child care and health, and the like.

Citizenship Education

Educating citizens for democracy has been conducted by some organizations such as Turkish Hearths, People's Houses, Village Institutes, Public Education Centers, National Schools, the Army and many other agencies.

Turkish Hearths, as non-government organizations, have done valuable work in encouraging arts, literature, sports, local welfare, and the emancipation of women, and helped the promotion of nationalistic consciousness in the development of the solidarity of Turkish society since 1913. Their methods consisted mainly of meetings, lectures and publications. In 1932 the national schools replaced the famous Turkish Hearth clubs.

The People's Houses were established in every town and city after the 1931 Congress, in which a great determination had been shown to make the Revolution reach the people and to inculcate patriotism and republicanism. The activities in these houses were to be organized in nine different sections:

1) Language and literature;
2) Fine arts;
3) Dramatics;
4) Sports and games;
5) Social assistance;
6) Literacy classes and foreign language courses;
7) Library and publications;
8) Rural activities;
9) Museums and exhibitions.

The quality of the contribution of the People's Houses to Turkish cultural life naturally varied from one place to another, depending on the local organizers. But broadly speaking, "they proved a blessing to Turkey, serving as true community centers providing social amenities and educational facilities of all kinds such as broadcasts, group discussions and panels, field-trips lectures, excursions, meetings, athletics, film shows and concerts, many of them published books and reviews" (Lewis, 122). From 1940 onward their work was supplemented by *People's Rooms* in villages, performing the same kind of function but with a smaller range of activities. All the opportunities in these houses and rooms were free of charge and for people of all ages, including services such as free medical care and free legal advice. These houses normally worked under a director and various committees, elected by the local committee of the Republican People's Party. In Ankara there was a central agency which guided and administered the Houses, though a good deal of local initiative was the characteristic feature of the house. In 1950, they reached 5000 in number. They were abolished in 1951 by the Democrat Party's government.

"During their relatively short life span of 13 years (1940-53), the Village Institutes contributed considerably to Turkish social and cultural life. The establishment of these institutes is known in Turkish Educational History as a turning point, for they contributed to eliminating illiteracy in rural areas as well as to starting a socio-cultural transformation in traditional village life" (Karagozoglu, 1992, 9). What prompted their creation was an awareness of the impossibility of providing enough qualified teachers for all of Turkey's forty thousand villages. At the institutes, children of either gender who had completed their course at a village primary school were trained as teachers. After five years of

instruction, they went back to their own villages, qualified not only as school teachers but also as pioneers of scientific farming and good citizenship.

Recent Efforts and Trends

Today, adult education in Turkey is conceived as an extension of educational opportunities to all people.It is carried out both within and outside of the formal educational system by governmental bodies, national institutions and voluntary organizations.

Outside the formal educational framework,the ministry of national education has created a large network of Public Education Centres covering the wole country since 1953.These centres ,crafts schools and travelling instructers provide a variety of courses including literacy courses.

Historically, primary schools in Turkey are considered as 'community schools' especially in the villages. They are responsible for arranging literacy courses for adults and socio-cultural activities for the public. Primary schools offer first and second stage literacy courses. The first stage focuses on reading, writing and basic mathematics. The second stage emphasizes basic education through which adults can obtain a primary school diploma. People can also get their primary school diplomas by examinations.

The illiteracy rate shows great differences between one community to another as well as one region to another. The villages are less fortunate than the cities. In general, illiteracy is more common in the east than in the west. This particular problem has long been receiving nation-wide attention and large-scale programs have been initiated from time to time.

Today, one out of every five persons of six years of age or over is illiterate.

Turkey initiated three more literacy campaigns in 1969, in 1973 and in 1981.The total number of the people who were certificated after the literacy campaigns between 1928 and 1989 was 6,535,425 (Bulbul,1991,.251). In all these literacy campaigns, women in rural areas had the first priority.

Increasing attention has been given to adult education. This can also be observed in the development plans.

The Fifth Five-Year Development Plan is intended to integrate the educational system by forming organic relations between formal and non-formal education. The plan refrained from treating adult education on a separate educational level and instead, defined educational institutions at all levels as organizations offering life-long services to adults in the evenings, on weekends and in summer months. It includes:

1.The Literacy Campaign

2.Conformity with the principles of Ataturk and with the Republican civic education

3.Vocational and Technical Adult Education

4.Training oriented towards farmers and increased agriculturalproductivity

5.Training for increasing production, marketing skills and teaching foreign languages

6.Training for increased exports and protection of consumers

7.Health and Family Planning

8.Programs related to family education

9.Training for Turkish citizens working abroad and for those who havemade their final return home.

According to the *Situation Analysis* (Unicef, 1991, 401), the main problems in Turkish Adult Education, are:

*High rate of illiteracy especially among women in rural, East and Southeast regions;

*Low rate of functional literacy attained after attending literacy courses;

*Low rate of population access to non-formal education activities;

*Ineffective scientific needs assessment in determining the type and context of adult education activities;

*Insufficient number of well-trained teachers in non-formal education.

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